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ABSTRACT

This document is the interview schedule which was used to collect the data reported in "The Adult's Learning Projects" (see note), a research study conducted to determine the basic characteristics of learning projects in several adult and youth populations. The document consists of the following: six pages of script for the interviewer to use in interviewing subjects, with hints and directions for using them, and handouts for interview subjects, including a list of some things that people learn about, question sheets designed to jog the interviewees' memories about how they have gone about learning, what they have learned, how much time they spent learning it, the effects of the learning, and who was responsible for planning the learning. (KC)

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INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

FOR STUDYING

SOME BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF LEARNING PROJECTS

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INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR STUDYING

SOME BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF LEARNING PROJECTS

Allen Tough

In 1969-1970, Allen Tough and others in the Department of Adult Education at OISE conducted a research project to study some basic characteristics of learning projects in several adult and youth populations. During further interviews over the years, the need for a few additonal changes in the interview schedule became evident: those minor changes were incorporated in the present version, produced in October 1975.

The findings are reported in The Adult's Learning Projects. This is the interview schedule referred to at the beginning of Chapter 3.

Each version of this interview schedule was produced by Allen Tough with very useful assistance from Jim Fair, Shirley Shipman, Vida Stanius, David Armstrong, Cressy McCatty, Annemarie Travers, and Barbara McIntyre.

The pages labelled "INTERVIEWER PAGE..." are for the interviewer's exclusive use. Each of the other sheets is handed to the interviewee at the appropriate time (or is read aloud if the person's reading skills are too low). The page numbers on some of the handout sheets are left over from an earlier system of numbering pages.

These questions may be used freely by other researchers. But I would be very grateful if you would let me know whenever you collect data with this interview schedule or a modified form of it. And please tell me about any papers or reports or theses based on such data, so that I can refer other readers to it in my future writing. Thanks very much. My address is Department of Adult Education, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 252 Bloor Street West, Toronto, Canada M5S 1V6.

[Introduce yourself. If necessary, check that this person meets the criteria for this particular sample.]

Our research is about what sorts of things people learn. Everyone learns, but different people learn different things--and in different ways.

I'm interested in listing the things you have tried to learn during the past year.

[For elementary and secondary school students only] We won't include learning for school, though. That is, if your main reason for learning something was to pass your year or please your teacher at school, we will not inlcude it. But if that was only part of your reason for learning, then we will certainly include it.

When I say "learn" I don't just mean learning the sorts of things that people learn in schools and colleges. I mean any sort of deliberate effort at all to learn something, or to learn how to do something. Perhpas you tried to get some information or knowledge --- or to gain new skills or improve your old ones --- or to increase your sensitivity or understanding or appreciation.

Can you think of any efforts like this that you have made during the past 12 months? [Pause and record.]

Try to think back over all of the past 12 months --- right back to (month) last year. I am interested in any deliberate effort you made to learn anything at all. Anything at all can be included, regardless of whether it was easy or hard, big or little, important or trivial, serious or fun, highbrow or lowbrow. [Pause and record.]

It doesn't matter when your effort started, as long as you have spent at least a few hours at it sometime since last (month). [Pause and record.]

We want to get as complete a list as possible, because we think that people make far more attempts to learn than anyone realizes. We can include any sort of information--knowledge--skill--or understanding at all that you have tried to gain --- just as long as you spent at least a few hours at it sometime during the past 12 months. What else do you recall? [Pause and record.]

Now, I have a list of some of the things people learn. It may remind you of other things that you have tried to learn during the past 12 months. Take as long as you want to read each word, and to think about whether you have tried to learn something similar. [Give the sheet entitled "Some things that people learn about."]

Introduce and use handout sheets 2A and 2B.

OK, thank you. That gives us a fairly complete list. If you suddenly think of something else you have learned, though, please tell me.

Now I want to find out a bit more about each of your efforts to learn. Let's begin with the first one on the list. It was your effort to learn _____. This sheet will help us estimate the number of hours you spent at your actual efforts to learn this, plus the number of hours spent at planning and preparing for that learning.

[Hand out sheet #5. If possible, pin down and record just what the learning episodes were. For example, you could ask, "How did you go about learning this? What did you do? . . . Was there anything else you did to learn it?" Examples of the activities you might record are: watched a pro, listened to records, read . . ., practised, attended . . . This list of activities is primarily for your benefit in helping the person estimate time accurately: we do not need the data for other purposes.]

[If you are doubtful about any activities suggested as learning episodes, check whether the desire to gain and retain certain knowledge and skill was stronger than all the other purposes put together. For example, you might ask the following question: "In that activity or episode, was your desire to gain certain definite knowledge and skill, and to retain it for at least two days, stronger than all your other purposes put together?" Or you could ask, "During that activity, how long did you want to retain what you were learning?"]

[If the number of hours is below 14, check two criteria. First, "Within some six-month period, during the past year, did you spend at least five hours at the learning itself--that is, at the first items on your sheet?" Second, "Within some six-month period or other, during the past year, did you spend at least seven hours altogether?"]

[Repeat for each learning project. Record the bottom question, too, on handout sheet #5.]

Now we return to that first learning project on the list. The knowledge and skill you gained in that one was _____. For that knowledge and skill, please tell me your answers to these questions. [Give handout sheet #7. Simply record the three letters for each learning project.]

In any of your learning efforts listed so far, was credit any part of your motivation? That is, did you hope to use any of your learning efforts for academic credit--towards some degree or certificate or diploma, for example? [Pause] Was any of your learning directed toward passing a test or examination, completing an assignment for a course, or producing a thesis? [Pause] Were any toward some licence, or a driving test --- or toward some requirement or examination or upgrading related to a job?

[Probe if there are any other learning projects in the list that you think might have been for credit.]

[For each learning project that he or she says was for credit] Think of all your reasons for this particular learning effort. Was your desire for credit about one-quarter of your total motivation for learning, or about a half, or 90% --- or just what portion was it? [Record as "credit" if 30% or higher; and as "non-credit" if less than 30%.]

Now we are going to think about each of your learning efforts in turn, and try to decide who or what was the planner. That is, who decided <u>what</u> you would learn--and <u>how</u> you would learn--whenever you spent some time trying to learn? The first learning effort in our list is _____. Does it fit into one of the four types on this sheet? [Give time to read through the handout sheet labelled "PLANNERS".]

[If no one resource was primarily (51%) responsible, classify that learning project as "mixed planner." If the person does not seem to understand, or if you feel doubtful about the response, ask who the <u>particular</u> planner was. If the learner asks, or if you anticipate difficulty, say that we are interested in who the planner was for the past 12 months rather than earlier.]

[Repeat for each learning project. Do not bother asking for details about the particular planner or methods, but whenever these are mentioned please record them.]

[If the planner was a <u>group</u>, or the instructor in a group:] Now, I want you to choose one of two possibilities. The first possibility is that this group was sponsored by an educational institution, or it had an instructor or leader or speaker who was assigned in that group or was paid for this task. The second possibility is that it was just framework, and taking turns planning their own learning activities. Which was your group?

[If the learning project had a one-to-one planner:] Now I will suggest two possibilities, and I want you to tell me which one is correct. One possibility is that the one person who helped you was paid to do so (paid by you, or by someone else), or the person was doing so because this was a definite responsibility for him or her, or part of his or her job. The other possibility is that the person was helping primarily because he or she was a friend or relative. Which was the case for <u>your</u> learning project? If a friend or relative, ask: "Was he or she a trained or professional instructor in this subject matter who just happened to also be your friend or relative?"

<u>NOTE</u>: Also record the major source of subject matter. That is, what resource provided most of the content? Examples: my brother; a pro ski instructor; Dr. Spock's book; several books; a parents' discussion group at the church.

Details of occupation (if homemaker or student, also ask for husband's or father's occupation):

Highest year or grade of schooling completed, plus any further training or certificates:

Name:

Mailing address:

Phone number:

Sex:

Miscellaneous Notes for Interviewers

Do not interrupt the person's list of learning projects in order to ask criterion questions unless it is clear that the person is far off the track. Whenever there is a long pause, though, you may want to clarify the one or two or three possible learning projects that have just been mentioned. Use all your insight and questioning skill in order to understand just what the real focus was. Try to become precise about just what the person was trying to learn. Especially if the person selects one of the methods or subjects from our lists, try to get them to use their phrase rather than ours. Record the desired knowledge and skill, the task or responsibility, the question or interest, or whatever the focus was.

Do not quarrel with the person's decisions and data, but do sometimes make one or two attempts to check their understanding of the question or to clarify an answer. Record any doubts you have about the responses you get.

Whenever the person mentions some activity or some area of life that you think might have produced other learning projects, too, ask about this possibility.

Detailed definitions and criteria are presented in the book The Adult's Learning Projects; see especially Chapter 2 and Appendix A).

Some things that people learn about

a sport or game; swimming; dancing; bridge

current events; public affairs; politics; peace; biography

sewing; cooking; homemaking; entertaining

driving a car

home repairs; woodworking; home improvement project; decorating and furniture

a hobby or craft; collecting something; photography

raising a child; discipline; infant care; child's education

nature; agriculture; birds

mathematics; statistics; arithmetic

speed reading; effective writing; public speaking; vocabulary; literature

science; astronomy; man in space

health; physical fitness; posture; clothes; appearance

history; geography; travel; some region or city or neighborhood

personal finances; savings; insurance; investing; purchasing something

psychology; effective relationships with other people; groups; leadership; social skills

typing; data processing; mechanical skill

some personal problem; mental health; an emotional problem; an illness or medical condition

various careers; choosing an occupation; finding a job

gardening; landscaping

something related to a job or responsibility or decision

musical instrument; singing; music appreciation

professional or technical competence; sales skills; how to teach or supervise

some aspect of religion; ethics; philosophy; moral behaviour

current changes in society; the future; problems in cities; pollution; sociology

dating; relationship with the opposite sex; manners; marriage; relationships within the family

art; painting; architecture

business management; economics; business

sensory awareness; human potential; communication; understanding oneself; efficiency

new techniques; a new way of doing something; an innovation

English; French; some other language

Can you recall any other efforts to learn that were related to your home or your family? Anything related to your hobbies or recreation? Your job? Your responsibilities in various organizations, or clubs, or in a church or synagogue, or on a committee, or some other responsibilities? Anything related to some teaching, writing, or research that you do outside of your job?

Going right back over the past 12 months, can you recall any other times that you tried to learn something by reading a book? When you read newspapers or magazines, do you read certain topics or sections because you want to remember the content? Have you tried to learn anything else from booklets, pamphlets, or brochures? From memos, letters, instructions, or plans? From technical or professional literature? From material from a library? From workbooks or programed instruction? From an encyclopedia or other reference work?

Have you learned anything at all from a medical doctor? From a lawyer? From a counselor or therapist? From a financial or tax adviser? From a social worker? From a coach? From a private teacher? From a specialist or expert? From individual private lessons?

Have you learned anything from documentaries or courses on television? From TV news or some other TV programs? From radio? In a theatre?

Have you tried to learn from conversations? Or from asking questions: that is, have there been any topics or areas that you have tried to learn about from your friends or other people? Have you deliberately sought to learn by seeking out stimulating individuals? Have you tried to learn anything from your parents or your spouse? From your brother or sister? From a neighbor?

Perhaps you have learned something in some group or other? Perhaps in some meeting or discussion group? From attending a conference? From a retreat or weekend meeting? From an institute or short course or workshop? From a committee or staff meeting? From taking a course? From attending evening classes, or lectures, or a speech? From a correspondence course? From attending a club or association?

Perhaps tape recordings or phonograph records or "a language lab" helped you learn something during the past year?

Have you learned in a church or synagogue? In a college, university, or school? In some community organization? In a company or factory or office? In a government program? In an exhibition, museum, or art gallery? In some vacation program? In some extracurricular activity after school? In a club? At the "Y"? At a camp?

Can you think back to 11 months ago? Try to recall your main jobs, activities, and problems at that time. Were there any efforts to learn connected with these? How about <u>six</u> months ago?

1. We need your best guess about the total amount of time you spent at all aspects of this particular learning effort during the past 12 months.

Please include the time you spent reading --- listening --- observing --- or learning in some other way --- if your main purpose during that activity was to gain and retain certain knowledge or skill. In other words, we will include all the times during which at least half of your total motivation was to gain certain knowledge or skill, and to retain it until at least two days later.

In addition to the time you spent at the actual learning itself, please include all the hours that you spent, during the past 12 months, at deciding about the learning, planning the learning, and preparing and arranging for it. This can include any time spent at deciding whether to proceed with the learning --- deciding what to learn --- deciding how to learn --- deciding where to get help --- seeking advice about these decisions (from other people or from printed materials) --- traveling to some of the learning activities, such as a meeting or practice session or library --- arranging appropriate conditions for learning --- choosing the right book or person for the actual learning --- obtaining that book or reaching that person.

Of course, you cannot remember exactly how many hours, so just give your best guess. If you wish, just choose the closest number from the following list: 1 3 6 10 20 40 70 100 140 180 or more.

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2. Which of these two answers best describes this particular learning effort at the present time:

(A) NOT VERY ACTIVE --- that is, you have dropped it or completed it, or you have set it aside for a while (or you are spending much less time at it now then you were before);

(B) DEFINITELY ACTIVE --- that is, you are definitely continuing this learning effort right now, and you are spending about as much time as ever at it.

1. Please think for a moment about how much knowledge, information, and understanding you gained as a result of this one learning project -- or think about how much your skills and habits improved -- or how much your attitudes or sensitivity changed.

Would you say that altogether:

(A) you learned a large amount or changed a great deal;

(B) you were about halfway between (A) and (C); or

(C) you just changed or learned a little.

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2. How enthusiastic have you been about having this new knowledge and skill?

(F) very enthusiastic;

(G) quite enthusiastic or fairly enthusiastic;

(H) not especially enthusiastic.

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3. Let's set aside your own benefits for a moment, and look at any benefits for other people. Your new knowledge and skill might have been of some benefit to your family, your friends and relatives, your boss, your company or organization, your field, or even to people who live in other places.

To what extent did the knowledge and skill you gained provide some benefit to people other than yourself?

(J) to a fairly large extent;

(K) medium (about halfway between J and L);

(L) only to a small extent.

PLANNERS

There are four different sorts of learning efforts, according to who plans them. That is, a person's efforts to learn can be classified according to who was responsible for the day-to-day planning. We have to look at who planned or decided exactly what and how the person should learn at each session. For example, who decided what the person should read or hear, or what else he or she should do in order to learn?

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1. Some learners decide to attend a group or class or conference, and to let the group (or its leader or instructor) decide the activities and detailed subject matter from one session to the next. A group may be of any size from five persons to several hundred.

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2. In other learning efforts, the planning or deciding of the details is handled by one person, who helps the learner in a one-to-one situation. That is, there is one helper (or instructor, teacher, expert, or friend), and there is only one learner. These two persons interact face-to-face, or through correspondence or the telephone.

Private music lessons, individual lessons from a golf pro, and being taught to drive a car by a friend are examples. Two or even three learners receiving individualized attention from one other person during the same session can be included here.

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3. In some learning projects, most of the detailed planning regarding what to learn and do at each session resides in some object (some nonhuman resource).

Examples of these are: a set of recordings, a series of television programs, a set of programmed instruction materials, a workbook or other printed materials, and a language lab. The learner follows the program or materials: they tell him or her what to do next.

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4. In other learning projects, the learner retains the major responsibility for the day-to-day planning and decision-making.

The learner may get advice from various people and use a variety of materials and resources. But he or she usually decides just what detailed subject matter to learn next, and what activities and resources to use next. Instead of turning the job of planning over to someone else, the learner makes these day-to-day decisions himself or herself.